

THE STRUGGLE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN FROM A CRITICAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE: A LITERATURE STUDY OF THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OF LAKE TOBA

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ABSTRACT. This article explores the struggle of indigenous women in the Lake Toba region through a critical feminist perspective. Critical feminism is employed here not only to analyze the complexity of Indigenous women's experiences in the Lake Toba region, but also as a theoretical framework for envisioning and advancing Indigenous women's movements. Using a literature study method, this research analyzes various academic works, reports, and secondary data related to indigenous women, capitalism, patriarchy, and corporatist development. This study argues that indigenous women experience various forms of marginalization caused by the intersection of state-supported capitalist expansion, which has led to the loss of their access to land and healthy living spaces. This capitalist expansion further deepens gender-based injustice, particularly within the context of patriarchal social constructions. The findings show that critical feminism not only provides a framework for understanding these structural inequalities, but also offers a paradigmatic foundation for building more inclusive and emancipatory social movements. Furthermore, critical feminism helps prevent the co-optation of movements by neoliberal capitalist interests and strengthens solidarity among marginalized groups in confronting alliances between corporations and the state. This study contributes to the development of critical feminist discourse in the context of Batak indigenous women and indigenous social movements in the Lake Toba region.

Keywords: Indigenous women; critical feminism; Lake Toba

ABSTRAK. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi perjuangan perempuan adat di kawasan Danau Toba melalui perspektif feminisme kritis. Feminisme kritis di sini tidak hanya untuk menganalisis kompleksitas pengalaman perempuan adat di Danau Toba, tetapi juga untuk memproyeksikan secara teoretis pengembangan gerakan perempuan adat. Dengan menggunakan metode studi literatur, penelitian ini menganalisis berbagai karya akademik, laporan, dan data sekunder yang berkaitan dengan perempuan adat, kapitalisme, patriarki, dan pembangunan korporatis. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa perempuan adat mengalami berbagai bentuk marginalisasi yang disebabkan oleh pertautan antara ekspansi kapitalisme yang disokong negara dan menyebabkan mereka kehilangan akses terhadap tanah dan ruang hidup yang sehat. Ekspansi kapitalisme ini semakin memperdalam ketidakadilan berbasis gender terutama dalam konteks konstruksi sosial yang patriarki. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa feminisme kritis tidak hanya menyediakan kerangka untuk memahami ketimpangan struktural tersebut, tetapi juga menawarkan landasan paradigmatis dalam membangun gerakan sosial yang lebih inklusif dan emansipatoris. Selain itu, feminisme kritis membantu mencegah kooptasi gerakan oleh kepentingan kapitalisme neoliberal serta memperkuat solidaritas antar kelompok termarginalkan dalam menghadapi aliansi antara korporasi dan negara. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan diskursus feminisme kritis dalam konteks perempuan adat Batak dan gerakan sosial masyarakat adat di Danau Toba

Kata kunci: Perempuan adat; feminisme kritis; Danau Toba

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples often receive various forms of injustice, including agrarian, environmental, gender and social injustice as a result of state control over forests and deprivation of indigenous peoples' rights, which then encourage the emergence of various forms of resistance and develop into social movements (Siscawati, 2014b).

This research discusses the injustice received by indigenous peoples as a result of development that does not pay attention to indigenous peoples in general and gender aspects in particular, which further marginalizes the position of indigenous women. Starting from this background, indigenous women also carry out social movements as a form

of resistance to the injustice they receive. This article attempts to discuss the indigenous women's movement from the perspective of critical feminism.

One important aspect of critical feminism is the demand for a politics of redistribution. In general, the politics of redistribution itself is one of the important aspects of civic politics. Redistribution is one of the demands in a political struggle that departs from the material conditions that there are social, economic and other inequalities that result in injustice.

In other words, redistributive politics cannot be ruled out, because as Nancy Fraser argues, there is a problem of economic inequality caused by neoliberal forces that promote corporate globalization. And these neoliberal forces undermine governance structures that previously enabled redistribution within the

state. This is why redistribution is so important to address (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The struggle for redistributive justice is certainly interpreted as a form of resistance to the existence of economic, social and political inequality, one of which is caused by development practices that are more favorable to corporations, which are also facilitated by the state, which should be an entity that ensures the realization of public welfare.

As an important note, according to Fraser, neoliberalism itself emerged as a result of the decline of an era called state-run capitalism (Fraser, 2013). Both state-run capitalism and neoliberalism are the starting point of Fraser's critique in formulating critical feminism.

It can be said that redistributive claims are rooted in the search for a fairer distribution of resources and wealth. This redistributive justice is fought for through institutional and extra-institutional mechanisms of political participation. This happens in many places, one of which is around the Lake Toba region, North Sumatra.

The Lake Toba region, in addition to offering beauty, also holds a myriad of problems. Over the past three decades, for example, the presence of corporations such as PT TPL is considered to have caused ecological damage, seized customary land that had been managed by the community, and destroyed the social capital that had been built among fellow communities. In the end, these various damages have the potential to further marginalize indigenous women (Andriyansah, 2022).

Indigenous women in the land of North Sumatra and almost all parts of Indonesia have long been victims of structural inequality and exploitative development that does not pay attention to gender aspects. Various development programs have led to social conflicts and environmental destruction which then override and even violate women's rights. Women are the most vulnerable to losing their livelihoods due to forest destruction and land grabbing, and often also experience violence in areas of agrarian conflict (Greenpeace, 2022).

Starting from this issue, the researcher argues that it is important to dissect the issue from the perspective of critical feminism. In critical feminism, as theorized by Fraser, the expansion of social justice is only possible if there is a critique of capitalism on the one hand, and involves gender analysis on the other. The framework of criticism of capitalism here, not only refers to the economy, but also to institutionalized social conditions, thus producing a more comprehensive analysis, because it also questions the ecology, social structure and so on (Mudzakir, 2021a).

The researcher considers that the study of civil society movements in relation to democracy, especially those involving marginalized groups, is very important to do. This is part of an effort to pave the way for democracy in Indonesia to run in a more substantive direction and not just formal democracy. It can be said that the civil society movement is their political participation in order to challenge the dominant social and political structures.

In many studies, it is explained that political practices in Indonesia are controlled by a handful of elites who are referred to as groups of financiers and or oligarchs (Hadiz & Robison, 2014; Winters, 2014) In the oligarchic framework, the way political structures work is to accumulate capital. In this process, what happens is the hijacking of the development agenda and or public policies that can have an impact on the marginalization of gender discourse in development policies in particular and marginalize other lower social classes in general. In relation to this study, Willem van der Muur, for example, summarizes a number of studies and mentions that informal alliances between rulers and entrepreneurs are one of the main factors that cause local communities (in this case indigenous peoples) to lose access to land, have an impact on law enforcement and so on, and this has led to widespread conflict between local residents on the one hand and state-corporates on the other (van der muur, 2019). In the context of such conflicts, the position of indigenous women is often marginalized. This can cause the quality of democracy in Indonesia to not improve. This is because democracy is also related to the access of marginalized groups to various economic resources and so on.

This article aims to explore the experiences of Indigenous women in the Lake Toba region, demonstrating that despite the pressures of patriarchal social structures and the expansion of state-supported capitalism that has further marginalized them, Indigenous women continue to assert themselves as agents of change through various forms of social resistance. In addition, this article seeks to critically examine the relevance of critical feminism as a theoretical project for the development and strengthening of Indigenous women's movements.

This article complements the literature on indigenous women's movements. Previous studies related to indigenous women, such as the articles "Forest Tenure Battles and the Struggle of Indigenous Women" (Siscawati, 2014b), "Indigenous Women and Poverty: Experiences, Dilemmas and Challenges in Ethnographic Research" (Niko, 2022) and others pay little or no attention to Fraser's analysis. While other research that is a biography of Nancy

Fraser's thought, such as "Feminism as a Critique of Capitalism: Introducing Nancy Fraser's Critical Theory" (Mudzakir, 2021b), "Nancy Fraser: Getting Around the Traps of Capitalism" (Wahyono, 2021) and so on do not specifically contextualize Nancy Fraser's ideas of critical feminism with the struggle of indigenous women of Lake Toba. Meanwhile, the study in this article, by examining the analysis of critical feminism, seeks to elaborate on the complexity of indigenous women's problems both from gender relations in the cultural system and especially marginalization caused by structural problems. Based on Nancy Fraser's ideas of critical feminism, this article argues that the Lake Toba indigenous women's movement has actualized Fraser's ideas, because it is not only focused on the struggle for recognition, but has embedded structural awareness and the pursuit of redistributive justice. This article also suggests the importance of Fraser's ideas as a foundation for reorienting the indigenous women's movement in general. Another point that distinguishes this article from other articles on indigenous women is the elaboration of Fraser's idea of public sphere, which the research in this article suggests will be very beneficial for the effectiveness of the indigenous women's movement.

METHODS

This study employs a literature review method because the available literature sources are more than sufficient to answer the research problem (Zed, 2004), using a critical feminist approach. Feminist studies differ from positivist-oriented research because, within feminist scholarship, the vision and objective of research are to reveal women's agency (Meij, 2009; Cusdiawan, 2021). In this study, we examined various sources, particularly those related to Indigenous women actors in Lake Toba who have been directly involved in resistance movements. We utilized quotations from their interviews, and to validate them, we compared quotations reported by one media source, such as Kompas.com and CNN Indonesia, with quotations reported by other sources, such as WALHI and others. We consider the interview quotations of actors who were directly involved to be more than sufficient for exploring the issue under investigation; therefore, we did not conduct direct interviews.

In addition to relying on media reports, we also reviewed official government websites, particularly those related to projects in the Lake Toba area. Furthermore, we relied on critical feminist theoretical references, including primary literature,

namely the writings of Nancy Fraser, as well as secondary literature in the form of dissertations and scholarly articles. These theoretical references served as the analytical framework for exploring the experiences of Indigenous women in Lake Toba who have experienced marginalization as a result of patriarchal social structures, further exacerbated by the expansion of capitalism supported by the state.

The critical feminist approach adopted in this study, which focuses on recognition and redistribution, is useful for analyzing Indigenous women's movements, which seek not only to struggle for their cultural rights as Indigenous women but also for redistributive justice. In this context, we also reconstruct the argument that the discourse of critical feminism can be useful for developing a more effective Indigenous women's movement within the broader Indigenous movement in Lake Toba, because one of the central concerns of critical feminist discourse is the development of a more inclusive movement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understanding Power Relations and Marginalization of Indigenous Women

Indigenous women are part of indigenous peoples whose presence cannot be separated from historical, social and cultural ties (Komnas HAM, 2021). As an important note, Toba Batak culture is rooted in a patrilineal kinship system and binds its members in a triadic relationship or better known as Dalihan Na Tolu, which is the relationship between descendants who come from certain kinship groups in a clan (Irianto, 2005). As is the case in most other cultures, Batak culture is also thick with patriarchal social structures. So that women face a double burden, and this condition is further exacerbated by development policies that do not pay attention to gender issues.

This phenomenon confirms that indigenous women still experience various forms of marginalization and domestic, public and state violence (Tsing, 1998). This marginalization must be seen as a consequence of unequal power relations. In the context of the marginalization and/or poverty of indigenous peoples, these power relations mainly involve the relationship between the state and indigenous communities through various laws and development policies introduced and implemented by the government. One of the arenas of these power relations, especially in the context of agrarian societies, is the unequal agrarian relations among agrarian subjects (local communities, migrant

groups, the state, companies, feudal elites and others) (Shohibuddin, 2010).

In general, women are often the most disadvantaged. In this context, this is partly due to the structures of neoliberalism, which cause suffering from both loss of livelihood or economic security, and loss of efforts to reassert control over their life choices and bodies. At both international and national levels, these forces are driving the destruction of women's right to define their sexual and reproductive rights agenda, the expression of sexual and reproductive rights (Barton, 2004).

In the context of this discussion, one of the main roots of the problem is that state control over forests paves the way for industrial-scale extraction of forest resources aimed at supporting production and consumption at the global level. The commodification of forests and other natural resources at the global level, operating under a capitalistic market economy, has led to the development of forestry capitalism in Indonesia (Siscawati, 2014a). The impact of this is development that does not pay attention to gender aspects and these conditions further marginalize indigenous women.

Indigenous women in the land of North Sumatra and almost all parts of Indonesia have long been victims of structural inequality and exploitative development that does not pay attention to gender aspects. Various development programs have led to social conflicts and environmental destruction which then override and even violate women's rights. Women are the most vulnerable to losing their livelihoods due to forest destruction and land grabbing, and often also experience violence in areas of agrarian conflict (Greenpeace, 2022).

Tabel 1. Major Corporate Concessions Affecting Indigenous Territories in the Lake Toba Region

Main Corporation/Concession	Sector	Period of Entry/Operation	Indigenous Territories Affected
PT Toba Pulp Lestari Tbk	Industrial Timber Plantation (HTI) / Pulp Industry	Since the 1980s (formerly PT Inti Indorayon Utama)	Batak customary forests in Toba, Humbang, Hasundutan, North Tapanuli, Simalungun, and surrounding areas
PT Aquafarm Nusantara	Floating Net Cage Aquaculture (Tilapia Farming)	Since the late 1990s	Coastal indigenous communities around Lake Toba
PT Allegrindo Nusantara	Aquaculture / Fish Farming	2000s	Indigenous settlements around Lake Toba

PT Regal Springs Indonesia	Industrial Aquaculture	Expanded significantly in the 2000s	Lake Toba indigenous territories
PT Inalum	Hydropower and Aluminum Industry	Since the 1970s	Asahan watershed and surrounding Batak customary territories
PT Sorikmas Mining	Gold Mining Exploration	2000s	Indigenous territories near Batang Toru ecosystem and broader Batak region
PT Gruti Lestari Pratama	Forestry / Plantation Concession	2000s	Customary forest areas in North Sumatra highlands

Source: Processed from reports published by AMAN (2022), Walhi North Sumatra (2021), and Greenpeace Indonesia (2022)

The presence of concessions within indigenous territories by the state has resulted in the destruction of living spaces and the reduction of the management areas owned by indigenous women (Sari et al., 2022). The presence of two large companies such as PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL) and PT Dairi Prima Mineral (DPM) has long taken away the rights of rural women in the Toba region and destroyed incense forests. The resulting environmental degradation has caused a climate crisis that makes it difficult for farmers to determine the planting season. Farmers also often experience crop failure due to unpredictable weather. In mid-2020, a new threat came with the birth of a large-scale food project or Food Estate. The project, which was predicted as a food security program to deal with the food crisis in the future, in fact eliminated women's culture, experience and knowledge in local agricultural patterns. They must rely on the market system determined by the government and large corporations. This project, as with previous agricultural projects, will only create new conflicts, food industrialization that excludes the community, and monopolization of agricultural lands with schemes that look good on the surface (Greenpeace, 2022).

On the other hand, indigenous women also experience another problem, namely that political space both at the community and state levels is still very narrow and limited. Indigenous women need another bridge to enter formal processes, because they have their own challenges in articulating their demands. Due to a sense of commonality and a shared aspiration to address the systematic destruction of indigenous women, indigenous women came together and formed the PEREMPUAN AMAN organization. This was done with the hope that indigenous women could realize life in an equal, just and sustainable society (Sari et al., 2022). As an important note, in

general, the struggle of indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the context of their response to the state's denial of their existence (Rachman, 2014).

PEREMPUAN AMAN sees indigenous women as champions of social change. Their voices are not only seen as individual voices, but also as representing a group of indigenous women who help to build a political identity. Indigenous women face many challenges from both outside and inside, which can destroy their own identity. So far, their knowledge is not recognized, their skills are seen as products that ultimately become commodities. Indigenous women also experience discrimination and even violence in various forms. The violence uses the context of tradition as a label. This is still a challenge today (Sari et al., 2022).

In the Lake Toba region, indigenous women who are also members of the AMAN Women's group have also spoken out and resisted the presence of PT TPL. Women are the most affected by the seizure of thousands of hectares of land and the destruction of forests - including incense forests - by the company. The government, which has long neglected to fulfill women's rights, has instead exacerbated poverty conditions by granting licenses to companies that destroy natural resources. Again, women's opinions and local knowledge are ignored. The experience of cultural and structural oppression like this finally encouraged women to take a big role in resisting and voicing their rights. The critical awareness of these women can be seen in various activities such as consolidation, discussion, and re-management of lands seized by the company. The successful struggle of a group of women in Sugapa in 1983 in rejecting PT Indorayon (now PT TPL) and reclaiming their land became a symbol and motivation for struggle for women, especially in the Lake Toba region. Despite experiencing a lot of criminalization, the struggle of the women in Sugapa is an example of success (Sihotang, 2022)

Indigenous Women's Movement as an Actualization of Critical Feminism

As mentioned earlier, indigenous women organized themselves by forming Perempuan AMAN, a wing organization of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), which was declared on 16 April 2012 in Tobelo, North Halmahera, North Maluku Province. This organization was established based on the experience that indigenous women need a platform other than AMAN as a place to learn and consolidate themselves to be able to voice their own interests. For this reason, PEREMPUAN AMAN was established to facilitate

indigenous women in organizing themselves, their knowledge and their rights. The organization consists of individual indigenous women from AMAN member communities (Perempuan AMAN, n.d.-a).

To address the complexity of the problems and burdens faced by indigenous women, AMAN has a vision of "Indigenous women sovereign over themselves, their lives and their territories in order to realize a sovereign, independent and dignified Indigenous Peoples". They also have various programs, namely (1). Capacity building, which seeks to increase the capacity of indigenous women in various aspects such as politics, law, economy, and ecology in domestic, public and state spheres; (2). Knowledge, which seeks to document the knowledge and experiences of indigenous women; (3). Advocacy that seeks to advocate for policies on the rights of indigenous women; (4). Identity which seeks to build and strengthen awareness of identity as women and indigenous women (Perempuan AMAN, n.d.-b).

However, a series of indigenous women's struggles have been met with various challenges, both from the state apparatus and corporations. Several cases show that the women received various acts of violence, for example the case of indigenous women in Lamtoras who struggled to face police brutality and employees of PT Toba Pulp Lestari (TPL). Dozens of police and TPL employees surrounded the Lamtoras Indigenous Community post in Buntu Pangaturan Sihaporas on Monday (18/7/2022) night at around 19.00 WIB. Police and TPL employees damaged the portal at the post without communicating with the Indigenous Peoples. They tried to drive out the blockade action that was mostly made by the Lamtoras Indigenous People to stop TPL activities. The brutal action carried out by TPL employees led to clashes. Several indigenous women were injured as a result of falling to avoid wood cutting machines aimed at their faces (Simanjuntak, 2022).

Another story that illustrates the role of women in the indigenous peoples' movement against corporations and the state is the story of Oni, a middle-aged woman who is a member of Team 11. Team 11 itself is an acronym for sincere, sincere and militant, which consists of 11 members. Team 11 walked from Lake Toba to Jakarta, and two of them were women, one of whom was called Oni. As a woman, Oni realizes that her cultural construct is more concerned with men, such as Batak women must have sons. The decision-maker is also a man. And, the one who speaks in customs, is a man. The struggle of the of Lake Toba is arguably inspired by the story of the agency of the Lake Toba

women's struggle in the past to close PT Indorayon (Hariandjawomen, 2021). Oni's statement is correct, in the Batak cultural system, the term *Dalihan na Tolu* is also known, which places women as objects and in an inferior position, while men are subjects and are in a superior position. In Batak culture, women must join the male family and the implication is that everything is determined by men. In this relationship, it can be said that women are only second-class citizens and men are prioritized (Siregar, 2018). It can be said that Oni's involvement in these activities is to prove that women can be agents of change, and are not limited to domestic work. On the other hand, it was done by Oni, because she realized how the presence of corporations in her customary land had an impact on ecological damage and deprived people of access to land that had previously been their source of livelihood, including women who previously depended on rice fields.

The story of Oni's involvement is certainly not the only story of indigenous women resisting. Much earlier, in the late 1980s, a woman from Sugapa Village, Silaen, North Sumatra, named Nai Sinta led the Sugapa women's resistance movement to defend land rights seized by PT Inti Indorayon Utama, a pulp and paper industry (Simbolon, 1998). The protest was organized by 10 women (Anto, 2001). The movement began when Indorayon, through the intermediary of the village head and the sub-district head of Silaen, managed to persuade some residents to surrender 51.36 hectares of customary land to be used as a PIR (Perkebunan Inti Rakyat) area to be planted with eucalyptus. The village head and sub-district head had already received money from Indorayon, and Indorayon considered that their actions were in line with procedure. But some villagers who are direct descendants of King Sidomdom Barimbing, the customary landowner, never gave their consent. The women protested by uprooting Indorayon's eucalyptus plants. As a result of this action, 10 women were sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment by the Tarutung District Court. The women appealed to the Medan High Court, and their sentence was reduced to 3 months. After that, the women took various other steps, such as complaining to the Minister of Home Affairs, and after a long process, they managed to regain their customary land on April 11, 1988 (Silaen, 2005).

Departing from the above explanation, it is important to look at the framework of the struggle of indigenous women in Lake Toba using Nancy Fraser's critical feminist lens. Fraser is known to be critical not only of patriarchal structures, but also of inequality that stems from criticism-capitalism. This

can be seen in the women's movement in Lake Toba. Their involvement in the movement, on the one hand, departs from their awareness that there are gender relations in the social system that have not benefited women who limit themselves to domestic work, and on the other hand they see the state's alignment with corporations and or capital owners increasingly marginalizing women, including the issue of access to land, as well as various ecological impacts that increasingly add to the burden of women and cause deeper suffering. Thus, this aspect of indigenous women's struggle is not only limited to the politics of recognition, but also redistribution. In Fraser's framework, recognition and redistribution are two of the three main points in citizenship politics. Thus, whether we realize it or not, the indigenous women's movement in Lake Toba is a progressive movement and actualizes the idea of critical feminism. Researchers consider the main point of their movement is not only on gender relations in the socio-cultural system, but more broadly, namely criticism of capitalism and or development that favors corporations, and this is related to socio-economic injustice caused by structural problems (in the sense of political economy).

Reorienting the Indigenous Women's Movement in Indonesia: A Critical Feminist Perspective

The women's movement, including that of Indigenous women, will not be adequate if it focuses solely on the politics of recognition. So far, there has been a tendency to position the women's movement primarily within the framework of identity politics while neglecting the class dimension. Consequently, developing the women's movement through the lens of critical feminism would be more capable of addressing contemporary challenges and preventing the movement from being co-opted by the neo-liberal regime, which is highly adaptive and capable of transforming itself without being fully recognized by the movement itself. If such co-optation occurs, the women's movement may unintentionally legitimize the neo-liberal order. This tendency can be observed in liberal feminism, which often promotes meritocracy while overlooking the structural roots of women's marginalization. In reality, women's oppression is not merely related to gender construction, but is also deeply connected to exploitative political-economic structures rooted in neo-liberal capitalism itself, which paradoxically also advances the discourse of meritocracy (Fraser, 2013).

In the context of Nancy Fraser's feminist thought, she emphatically argues that the women's movement should not separate identity struggles

from class struggles. For Fraser, both dimensions are inseparable and mutually intertwined. In other words, the women's movement contains not only a politics of recognition but also a politics of redistribution (Fraser, 2005). Fraser's central argument is that justice for women cannot be achieved merely through cultural recognition or symbolic inclusion, but also requires transformation of the political-economic structures that produce inequality.

According to the researchers, Fraser's theoretical framework is highly relevant for understanding the contemporary struggles of Indigenous women in Indonesia, particularly in the Lake Toba region. Indigenous women in Lake Toba not only experience gender-based marginalization rooted in patriarchal culture, but also structural exclusion resulting from corporatized development and extractive economic policies. The expansion of industrial forestry, tourism development, and large-scale investment projects in the Lake Toba area have increasingly threatened customary lands and ecological sustainability. Data from Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (AMAN) Tano Batak shows that Indigenous communities in the region have experienced prolonged agrarian conflicts associated with corporate concessions, particularly involving industrial plantation forests and pulp industries (AMAN Tano Batak, 2022). Meanwhile, Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) North Sumatra reported that ecological degradation and land conflicts in the Lake Toba region have threatened the socio-economic sustainability of local Indigenous communities (WALHI Sumatera Utara, 2021).

Within this context, Indigenous women occupy the most vulnerable position because environmental degradation and land dispossession directly affect their social reproductive roles. Studies conducted by Greenpeace Indonesia emphasize that Indigenous women are among the groups most severely affected by deforestation, ecological destruction, and the loss of customary forests because these processes undermine food security, access to water, and traditional livelihoods (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2022). Indigenous women in the Lake Toba region are often responsible for maintaining household food systems and preserving local ecological knowledge. Consequently, the destruction of forests and customary territories not only undermines economic livelihoods but also weakens the social and cultural foundations of Indigenous communities themselves.

Fraser's perspective becomes particularly important because it encourages the Indigenous women's movement to move beyond identity-based recognition alone toward broader structural

critique. Such an approach creates possibilities for a more inclusive movement that connects Indigenous women's struggles with those of other marginalized groups affected by neo-liberal capitalism, including peasants, laborers, fisherfolk, and urban poor communities. In the Indonesian context, corporatized development and extractive economic policies do not solely marginalize Indigenous women, but also produce wider social inequalities affecting subordinate classes in general. Therefore, solidarity across marginalized groups becomes strategically important for building stronger collective resistance against dominant political-economic interests.

Nevertheless, it must also be acknowledged that the politics of recognition remains crucial within Indigenous movements. Research by Cusdiawan and Rahmatunnisa (2023) demonstrates that identity politics plays an important role in mobilizing Indigenous communities because it strengthens collective consciousness, cultural belonging, and solidarity. This argument resonates with the work of Walker Connor, who argues that ethnic consciousness can become an important basis for political mobilization and collective solidarity (Connor, 1973). In the case of Indigenous women's movements, mobilization emerges not only from shared ethnic identity but also from shared experiences of gendered oppression. However, while recognition is important, Fraser's perspective reminds us that identity-based struggles alone are insufficient if they fail to address the structural foundations of inequality embedded within neo-liberal capitalism.

Thus, Fraser's ideas imply that the Indigenous women's movement should not merely fight for cultural recognition or symbolic acknowledgment of customary rights. Rather, it must also confront the broader political-economic structures that continuously reproduce dispossession and injustice. In many cases, customary lands previously controlled collectively by Indigenous communities have become increasingly threatened by alliances between political elites and corporate interests. This phenomenon reflects what Fraser (2013), drawing from Karl Polanyi, describes as the multidimensional crisis of capitalism, which not only generates economic inequality but also destroys social solidarity and accelerates ecological degradation.

Another important aspect of Fraser's theoretical project is her critique of Jürgen Habermas's conception of the public sphere. Fraser argues that Habermas' idealized notion of the public sphere as a neutral arena for rational deliberation becomes illusory when structural inequalities in material resources are ignored (Fraser, 1990). In reality,

those possessing greater economic and political power tend to dominate public discourse and policy-making processes. This critique is highly relevant to the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Indonesia, including in Lake Toba, where corporations and political elites possess significantly greater access to resources, media influence, and state institutions compared to Indigenous communities.

From the researchers' perspective, Fraser's critique of the public sphere is useful for sharpening the structural awareness of the Indigenous women's movement. Awareness of unequal power relations is essential for formulating more effective movement strategies and tactics. The imbalance of material resources between Indigenous communities and corporate actors often shapes decisions concerning land rights, development policies, and environmental governance, thereby further marginalizing Indigenous peoples in general and Indigenous women in particular. Consequently, equality within the political public sphere frequently becomes merely procedural rather than substantive, since actors with greater capital remain structurally dominant.

Therefore, strengthening solidarity and building inclusive alliances among marginalized groups become essential political strategies. Indigenous women's movements in Lake Toba demonstrate that resistance is not solely about defending cultural identity, but also about challenging exploitative structures that threaten ecological sustainability, social justice, and collective survival. In this sense, Indigenous women should not merely be understood as victims of development, but also as active agents capable of articulating alternative visions of justice, environmental sustainability, and democratic transformation.

Indigenous women in the Lake Toba region experience complex forms of marginalization. First, they are marginalized as a consequence of a patriarchal socio-cultural system, and second, as a result of a political-economic structure shaped by the invasion of capitalism, supported by the state, into Indigenous territories. However, despite these social structures that marginalize them, Indigenous women in Lake Toba continue to assert themselves as agents of change through various forms of social activism and collective action. Within the context of patriarchal socio-cultural relations, Indigenous women in Lake Toba seek to demonstrate that, like men, they also bear responsibility for protecting their customary lands, whose existence has been threatened by the expansion of capitalism.

Fundamentally, the struggle of Indigenous women in Lake Toba reflects the principles of

recognition and redistribution, two key dimensions within Nancy Fraser's critical feminist framework. Fraser does not position these dimensions in opposition to one another; rather, she regards both as essential components of democratic citizenship politics. In this context, we also argue that Fraser's critical feminist perspective can be useful for strengthening Indigenous women's movements in Lake Toba and making them more effective, given its emphasis on movement inclusivity. Such an approach may help prevent the dislocation of Indigenous women's movements while enabling them to build alliances with other movements, including those outside Indigenous communities, that are similarly engaged in struggles against marginalization.

Reflection and Recommendations

In Indonesian social science scholarship, particularly in the field of political science, gender and feminist studies have been largely centered on issues such as women's representation in parliament, ecofeminism, and related themes. Likewise, in global academic developments, critical feminist studies have not been as popular as feminist studies derived from the first wave of the feminist movement. Research focusing specifically on critical feminism remains limited, especially when linked to Indigenous women. Therefore, we believe that critical feminist studies, particularly within political science in Indonesia, need to be further developed, as they can provide a better understanding of the complexities of women's experiences, which are shaped not only by socio-cultural systems but also by political-economic structures.

Critical feminism can also prevent research from falling entirely into either a Hegelian perspective centered on recognition or a Marxist perspective centered on the critique of capitalism, since these two dimensions can be deeply intertwined. We propose that future critical feminist research should be more strongly grounded in comparative studies, so that the complexity of women's experiences across different regions or countries can be more fully revealed. Such an approach would make it possible to identify both similarities and differences, whether regarding the ways in which mechanisms of women's marginalization operate or the ways in which women emerge as agents. In doing so, the potential for producing broader knowledge about women's experiences will be greatly enhanced.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

In the process of revising this manuscript, ChatGPT was used to assist with the translation of the text into English.

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